

Chancellor's Community Forum
5 Year Plan
November 19, 2008
Smothers ES
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm
Erin McGoldrick

The notes below reflect our effort to summarize the comments, questions and concerns expressed at each meeting. They are not recorded verbatim and should not be considered direct quotations.

Overview: The major topics addressed by community members were the need for reaching more parents (ones that don't come to the forums), career and technical education, and quality teaching in a wide range of subjects. There was a profitable discussion about how to reach out to more parents, including attending other meetings (ANC for example) that are already scheduled, and reaching parents when they are already at the schools (morning, p.m. pickup, adult learning classes, etc.).

In relationship to CTE education, the main question was "*Where does it fit in the plan?*" and "*How are we planning to serve students who will choose not to go to college?*" Community members expressed a desire to restore career programs that are open to students in every ward while still keeping the academic rigor of these programs strong.

Conversations about class size, highly-qualified teachers and the importance of arts and physical education were also supported by multiple community members.

Keywords: special education, Career & Technical Education (CTE), arts & PE, weighted student formula, comprehensive staffing model, extracurricular, technology

Presenter/ Moderator: Kaya Henderson, Deputy Chancellor
Michelle Rhee, Chancellor

Panelists: Erin McGoldrick, Chief of Data and Accountability
Jim Sandman, General Counsel

Codes

MR = Michelle Rhee, Chancellor

KH = Kaya Henderson, Deputy Chancellor

EM = Erin McGoldrick, Chief of Data and Accountability

JS = Jim Sandman, General Counsel

CM = Community Member

Notes:

EM: *What part of the plan matches your vision? What do you see is missing?*

CM: Smothers just renovated nicely, but *how do you take teachers out of the schools and expect a good product? Class size (25+) prohibits achievement because teachers cannot keep up with that many kids...*

- Small class size should be a priority
- Particularly if/when **special education** students are integrated into the classroom, qualified **special education** educators need to be present in the classroom
- Work harder to schedule meetings in the community on different days/ times

CM: The parents of these students are not coming to the forums. *How can we work to involve the disenfranchised parents?*

- DCPS needs to do more outreach to parents who don't show up to forums, who have been disappointed time and again.
 - Some ideas that could address this issue are:
 - Work with unions that have good creative ideas on how to reach communities
 - Reach out to parents when they are already at the school for various reasons—resources, computer classes, morning breakfast, etc.
 - TRY to communicate before something gets out in the Post.
- Diversity training for white teachers working in Wards 7 & 8 to inform them that their students are not charity cases.

CM: DCPS could outreach to parents by attending ANC meetings when you are invited or other community meetings that are already set up.

CM: *Where does **Career & Technical Education (CTE)** fit into this plan?* The city used to have five prolific career/tech schools. The Washington area will need 16,000 electricians yet technical training has been de-emphasized.

CM: Our focus should be on keeping students in school.

CM: Professional development is essential, especially when teachers will be assessed on student achievement. **Technology** should be used as essential tool that enhances instruction

CM: I am concerned that we are trying to make DCPS exclusive, with “others” going to charters. Phelps, for example, is not an open school; it is an exam school. Why do students have to take a test for admittance? I am more concerned with **CTE** program that serve students who don't continue on to college

CM: Everybody is not college material.

MR: I would say that all kids are college material, but not all kids are going to choose college. Our goal is that every child graduates with options: college or the workforce. There was a time period when **CTE** education was labeled as not good. It was criticized as early tracking usually based on race & socioeconomic status. The effort toward equal options meant no CTE programs. We want to do both in DCPS have a good CTE curriculum as well as a rigorous, college – prep education.

CM: The focus is lopsided to the college-bound students. *What happened to home economics, woodshop, etc. in the regular curriculum? Also, where are music and the arts included?* The school should build a well-rounded person.

MR: I often hear the concern that teaching to the test will narrow the scope of the classes. I often tell principals that students exposed to a broad-based education actually do better in the core subjects. We have put a significant effort into getting **art, music, PE** teachers in every school. We also significantly increased funding to high schools for **extra-curriculars**, although we still are not funding these as we would like. We have a distance to go before we have the **extra-curriculars** that our students deserve.

CM: *Can you talk about the new **school budgeting**?*

MR: We are moving away from the **weighted student funding model**, into the **comprehensive staffing model** that has teachers for **art, PE**, etc. regardless of the number of students.

CM: We were looking to Phelps to have a hands-on vocational part. The model used to work well where one student could attend Chamberlin for **CTE** and Eastern for rigorous academics. *Why is Phelps test-admittance?*

CM: Disappearing **arts and PE**, etc. is happening around the country. The issue of schools raising their own money opens the door for inequity and corruption.

CM: if you put 7 & 8 grades in with younger students, it provides additional supports. There is a greater focus on learning instead of discipline. The schools sound like jails